

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-18 and 21-24 are pending, Claims 1, 21 and 23 having been amended, and Claims 19 and 20 having been canceled, by way of the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, the Information Disclosure Statement filed on December 16, 2005 was objected to; Claims 1-13 were objected to as containing informalities; Claims 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101; Claims 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph; and Claims 1-24 were indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Applicants appreciatively acknowledge the identification of allowable subject matter.

In reply, Applicants respectfully submit that the related case statement filed December 16, 2005 was submitted in compliance with MPEP §2001.06(b). Moreover, MPEP §2001.06(b) requires the Applicant inform the USPTO of co-pending applications with related subject matter that may be material to patentability. Consistent with this requirement, Applicants filed the related case statement on December 16, 2005.

The objection to Claims 1-13 has been addressed by correcting the informalities in Claim 1.

Claims 19 and 20 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and therefore, the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. §101 is now moot.

Claims 21 and 23 have been amended to be consistent with 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. However, if the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned so that mutually agreeable claim language may be identified.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 1-18 and 21-24,

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as amended, is statutory, definite, and patentably distinguishing over the prior art. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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